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C O N F I D E N T I A L ZAGREB 000659

SIPDIS

DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FROM DATT
DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SCE AND EUR/RPM
ALSO PLEASE PASS TO EUCOM PLANS AND ANALYSES STUTTGART GE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/17/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KPAO](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [NATO](#) [HR](#) [DEFENSE](#) [REFORM](#)

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR THE DEPUTY SECRETARY,S VISIT TO
CROATIA

Classified By: COL Brendan McAloon, DATT, for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) Sir, yours is the highest level visit since President and Mrs. Bush, and Secretary Rice visited after the Bucharest Summit in April 2008. Since that time, Croatia has continued its MAP process with an eye to full membership soon and increased its ISAF contribution from 200 to a maximum of 300 soldiers on the ground. There are 277 Croatian soldiers in Afghanistan now.

¶2. (C) Atmospherics. You have a good set of meetings with the MOD, MFA, PM and President scheduled for your time here. The NATO invitation completed the first part of Croatia,s goal to be accepted as an advanced European state. The second more distant step is an invitation to join the European Union. The Prime Minister has been a reliable supporter of U.S. positions, for example in the UNSC, while a sense of nostalgia for the good ol, non-aligned state days sometimes leads President Mesic to take what he sees as a more nuanced view of issues and seek dialogue with states like Russia and Iran. Prime Minister Sanader is a skillful politician who likes to keep his own counsel and thus rarely appoints strong ministers which is the case with both MoD Minister Vukelic and MFA Minister Jandrokovic.

¶3. (SBU) OMLTs: Croatia has the only non-NATO Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT) in ISAF for which it bears all the costs except the U.S.-provided stratlift. Croatia and the Minnesota National Guard are in the early stages of planning to deploy a combined combat-support OMLT next year. There are plans for a third, garrison-level OMLT to deploy to Afghanistan in the 2009-2010 timeframe. Croatia continues to express a desire to deploy a PRT in the future, but we assess that the current focus on OMLTs is the best use of its capabilities in the near to mid term.

¶4. (C) KFOR: The Croatian Parliament has authorized the deployment of two helicopters to Kosovo in 2009. We expect that the Croatians will offer two of their new MI-171Sh lift helicopters in September for deployment sometime in 2009. This will be the first deployment outside of Croatia for the Air Force. We expect that there will be a need to upgrade the new helicopters to NATO standards prior to deployment and that Croatia will ask us for that assistance.

¶5. (C) Peacekeeping: Croatia prides itself on its transition from a security consumer with UN Peacekeepers on its territory to a security provider with Croatian Armed Forces (CAF) elements involved in fifteen UN peacekeeping operations around the globe, to include the 3 Croatian participants in

the UN Mission to Georgia. The most recent deployment was of 98 CAF personnel to the UN mission in the Golan Heights. Croatia will soon deploy 15 soldiers to the EU-led mission in Chad. With these deployments Croatia is in the process of implementing its plans to increase and sustain its PKO contributions from around 250 soldiers in 2007 to 600 soldiers by 2010.

¶6. (C) ASPA: The U.S. FMF and IMET programs were suspended in July 2003 due to ASPA sanctions. As a result, in the past few years the CAF depended entirely upon national resources to accomplish its NATO partnership goals and to equip its forces for ISAF. Croatia is the only ISAF partner and new NATO invitee that accomplished its transformation and financed its ISAF commitments without FMF or Coalition Support Funding. The suspension of IMET during this time has had a telling impact throughout the CAF. Most notably is the lack of U.S.-educated staff officers at the senior and mid-grade officer level to fill critical billets on the MOD, CAF, and NATO Staffs. Croatia has been identified to receive one million dollars of Global Peace Operations Initiative funds, the bulk of which will be dedicated to improve the English language capability of the CAF.

¶7. (SBU) FMF/IMET levels. Croatia did not receive any FMF in FY08, and is projected to receive only 1.8 million dollars in FMF in 2009. IMET is similarly under-funded for a NATO invitee with only 309K in FY08 (including the 9K in end-of-year fallout) and is projected to receive 500K in FY09. The proposed budget numbers trend better in FY10.

¶8. (C) Procurement Priorities. U.S. FMF funding will be directed at obtaining the necessary NATO-compatible radio

equipment, night vision equipment, weapon sights, combat medical equipment, and GPS required to sustain Croatia,s forces in ISAF. Croatia currently has no Type 1 radios or Selective Availability Anti-Spoof Module (SAASM) global positioning systems in its inventory. The MoD has also expressed interest in procuring counter-IED jammers for its ISAF mission. We will also need to direct FMF funds to the upgrades needed to deploy Croatian helicopters to KFOR.

¶9. (C) Coastal Radars. The Croatian Navy has had ongoing problems with its Enhanced Peregrine coastal surveillance radar system. The Peregrine radar system purchase, from a private American manufacturer without US government involvement, began in 1999. To date the Peregrine radar system has not achieved full operational capability. The Croatian government and military have invested approximately 80 million US dollars and huge political capital trying to make the system work. This topic is significant enough to the Croatian government that President Mesic considered bringing it up with President Bush during the President,s visit to Zagreb in April 2008. In June 2008, a team of US Navy radar experts visited Croatia to inspect the system and offer advice, but not to perform hands on maintenance.

¶10. (C) F-16s. The MoD,s Long Term Development Plan calls for Croatia to replace its 12 soon-to-be post-lifecycle MiG-21 aircraft with a similar number of advanced fighters for domestic air policing. Croatia sent requests for information for Mirage, MiG-29, Eurofighter, Gripen, and F-16 (Block 15 used, Block 15 mid-life upgrade, and Block 50/52 new). Croatia now has all the answers it requested and is conducting further internal studies. Sticker shock and an inefficient procurement process means that we may not see a decision until next year or later.

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